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Navigating Early Care & Education Systems

A Training for DCFS Social Workers & ECE Providers

Los Angeles Child Welfare-Early Care Systems Infrastructure Project

July 31, 2012


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Sponsors

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Los Angeles Child Welfare-Early Care Systems Infrastructure Project



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children & Families




UCLA




PROJECT
About Building Connections
for young children and their families

Training Agenda

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- Guiding Topics
- Training Slides & Videos
- Breakout Discussions
- Important Contacts & Resources
- Post-Training Survey
- PGH Certificate for ECE Providers

Guiding Topics

DCFS Workers

- Head Start History
- ECE Basics, overview of types of ECE services
- Navigating the ECES network

ECE Providers


- Child Welfare History
- DCFS basics, guiding mission and services

Guiding Topics

DCFS Workers & ECE Providers

- Research evidence about the potential of ECE to improve developmental outcomes and school readiness for DCFS children
- Structural barriers of the referral and enrollment process
- Trauma-informed practice for DCFS children
- Eligibility for free or subsidized care for DCFS children

HEAD START & CHILD WELFARE HISTORY



Head Start History

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- Video: 45th Anniversary of Head Start

Child Welfare Philosophical Shifts

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- Child protection is a relatively “new” concept.
 - Animals were protected before children.
- Balancing of child safety considerations with desire to preserve family.
 - 14th Amendment protection of parental rights
- No universally accepted definition of child abuse and neglect.


Child Welfare Changes Over Time

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- Child protection moved from a nongovernmental concern to a governmental concern over time.
- Children’s Bureau focus progressed from placement services to prevention and family development.
- One constant:
 - Child protection has been recognized as an interdisciplinary concern requiring interdisciplinary collaboration since its inception.

DCFS "BASICS"

- Guiding mission
- DCFS services
- How to work with DCFS social workers in the context of ECE
- How to navigate the DCFS network



The "Basics": DCFS Mission Statement

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"The Department of Children and Family Services, with public, private and community partners, provides quality child welfare services and supports so children grow up safe, healthy, educated and with permanent families."

Strengthening Community Partnerships

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- Prevention Related Strategies
- Alternative Response Services
- Family Maintenance and Family Reunification
- Family Preservation/Family Support
- Point of Engagement
- Multi-Disciplinary Team Approach (TDMs)
- Community Mental Health Based Services
 - Wraparound, SOC, FSP Services, etc.
- Focus on strengths-based social work

Past and Current Caseloads Levels Department Wide and Local Office

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Over the last five years, the Department has made concerted efforts to reduce the number of children and families involved in open cases and reduce the number of children in out of home placement.

- ❑ In 1998 there were:
 - ❑ 61,000 open cases
 - ❑ 42,000 children in out of home care
- ❑ As of April 2012
 - ❑ 35,804 open cases
 - ❑ 18,455 children in out of home care
- ❑ Birth to 4 represents 32% of caseloads in LA County
- ❑ In South County:
 - ❑ 867 open cases for children birth to four years old

LA County Challenges

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- ❑ The sheer number of DCFS staff and variety of service providers creates confusion and barriers to efficiently connecting children to the correct child care and early education services
- ❑ The lack of foster homes in many Service Areas creates issues regarding continuity of service to children in child care and early education.
- ❑ Changing demographics of the community have created unique challenges in servicing children and families in parts of Los Angeles County

ECE "BASICS"

- ❑ Child and family protective factors in relation to ECE
- ❑ Overview of types of ECE services
- ❑ Case management benefits of referring DCFS children to ECE



Protective Factors & Early Care & Education

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- **Protective Factors:** Environmental and personal factors that are the source of children's resilience in the face of hardship
- The Strengthening Families curriculum identifies 5 protective factors as critical in reducing abuse & neglect.

Protective Factors

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- **Parental Resilience**
 - Ability to manage and bounce back from all types of challenges
- **Social Connections**
 - Networks of support are essential to parents and also offer opportunities for people to "give back"
- **Concrete Support in Times of Need**
 - Meeting basic economic needs like food, shelter, clothing and health care is essential for families to thrive

Protective Factors

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- **Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development**
 - Accurate information about child development and appropriate expectations for children's behavior at every age
 - Information is most effective when it comes at the precise time parents need it to understand their own children
- **Social and Emotional Competence in Children**
 - A child or youth's ability to interact positively with others, self-regulate their behavior and effectively communicate their feelings

What Constitutes Early Care & Education?

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- **Informal Care:** Surrogate care that replaces parental/caregiver supervision by temporarily providing a safe, healthy and developmentally appropriate environment for children.
 - Kin & Non-Related Extended Family Member (NREFM) care:
 - Care provided by an individual related to the child
 - Care provided in the child's home by a person other than a parent or relative

What Constitutes Early Care & Education?

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- **Formal Care:** Programs designed with the specific intent to help foster positive child development, specifically social-emotional or cognitive functioning.
 - Family Child Care Homes (FCCH):
 - Small FCCH with no more than 6 children (3 infants)
 - Large FCCH with no more than 14 children (3 infants)
 - Center-based Child Care:
 - Nursery School
 - Preschool
 - Compensatory Education:
 - Head Start
 - Chicago Child-Parent Centers (CPCs)

What Constitutes Quality ECE?

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- **Structural Factors:** Components of care that help foster positive child-adult relationships and child development:
 - Appropriate caregiver-to-child ratios*:
 - 3:1 for children birth – 12 months
 - 4:1 for children 12 – 30 months
 - 5:1 for children 31 – 35 months
 - 7:1 for children 3 years old
 - 8:1 for children 4 years old
 - Group size* (regardless of number of adult staff):
 - 6-8 infants
 - 6-12 toddlers
 - 12-20 preschoolers

* Recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics & American Public Health Association

What Constitutes Quality ECE?

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- **Structural Factors** continued:
 - Consistent accreditation status
 - Environmental health and safety certification
 - Staff credentialing and education
 - Specialized early childhood education and child development training
 - Licensing compliance

What Constitutes Quality ECE?

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- **Process Factors:** Factors that impact a child's experience.
 - Structured curriculum & developmentally appropriate materials:
 - Emphasizing age appropriate language and cognitive stimulation
 - Physical environment:
 - Safe for walking, crawling, rolling, sitting
 - Stability of staff
 - *Caregiver warmth, attention, responsiveness & sensitivity*



RESEARCH EVIDENCE

- Research evidence about the potential of ECE to improve developmental outcomes and school readiness for DCFS children



Importance of ECE for Children 0-5 Years Old

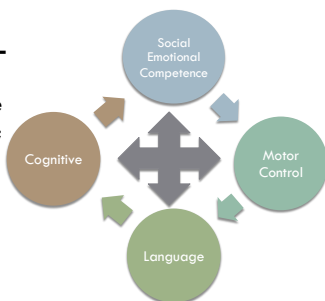
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- Extensive research has demonstrated that high quality ECE can improve developmental outcomes for at-risk youth
- Birth to 5 is a “sensitive period” in a child’s development that will help set the stage for adulthood
 - Child Development Domains
 - Social-emotional Functioning
 - Plasticity & Brain Development

Child Development Domains

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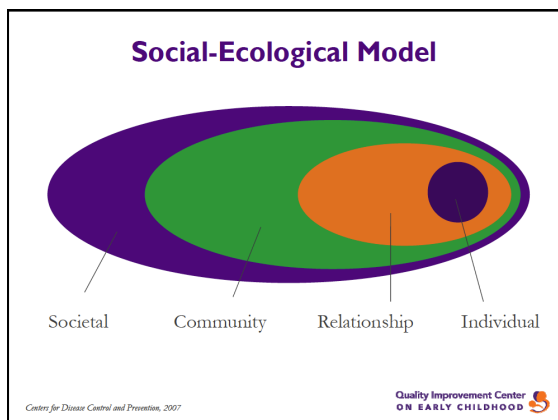
- All domains of development (**social-emotional, cognitive, language & motor**) are linked; each depends on, and influences, the others



Development Progression

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- Relatively orderly sequence
 - Abilities, skills and knowledge building on one another
- Varying rates of progression
 - Differences child to child
 - Unevenly within different areas of each child’s functioning
- Early experiences have cumulative and delayed effects on individual development
- Development and learning occur in and are influenced by multiple social and cultural contexts



Connection to ECE?

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- Head Start/Early Head Start promote nutrition through needs assessments for infants and toddlers
- High quality ECE is critical in stimulating different brain regions to provide a foundation for learning
- High quality ECE provides sensory experiences that support development of motor skills, which make cognitive changes possible

Connection to ECE?

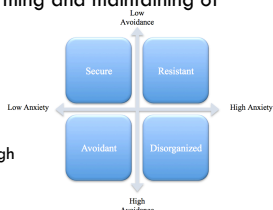
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- Early learning environments offer opportunities that support **cognitive development**:
 - Higher school readiness
 - More expressive language skills
 - Increased persistence in completing tasks

Social-Emotional Functioning

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- **Social-emotional competence:** Ability to behave appropriately in social situations that evoke strong emotions; appropriate forming and maintaining of personal relationships
- **Critical Components:**
 - **Attachment:** Bond that develops with a primary caregiver at 7-9 months
 - **Socialization:** "Process through which children acquire the standards, values, knowledge of their society" (Lightfoot, Cole & Cole, 2009)



Connection to ECE?

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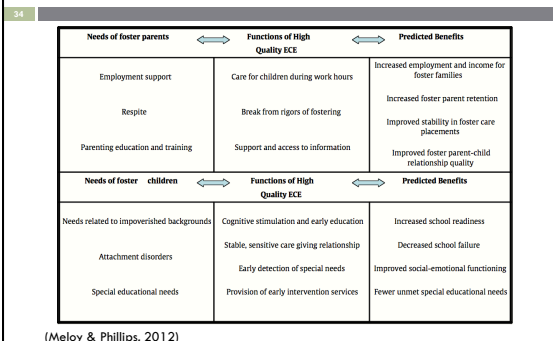
- Early learning environments offer opportunities that support **social-emotional functioning**:
 - ECE provides children with an opportunity to play and socialize with peers
 - Quality ECE provides children with opportunity to form a secure attachment to an additional caregiver
- Head Start Impact Study found:
 - Cooperative behavior with peers
 - Parents report EHS children exhibit less aggressive and decreased hyperactive behavior

Connection to ECE?

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- Head Start Impact Study also found that HS children:
 - Received dental care more frequently than control cohort
 - Retained health insurance at a higher rate
 - Were less likely to be spanked by their parents
- Children participating in Chicago Parent-Child Centers
 - 52% Reduced rates of maltreatment (Indicated DCFS Reports)
 - Grade retention decreased (20 – 30%)
 - 40-60% Reduction in special education placement
 - 42% Decrease in arrests by age 19

ECE Systems & Child Welfare



Benefits of Informal ECE

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General consensus: Quality of the care, quantity of care, age while in care, consistency, and the type of care are all critical in assessing benefits of informal care

Informal care can provide:

- ☐ Respite benefit and a "break from the rigors of parenting or fostering"
- ☐ Socialization for children to help them foster social & emotional competence
- ☐ Social connections for parents

Formal care can provide:

- ☐ Respite benefit and a "break from the rigors of parenting or fostering"
- ☐ Social connections for parents
- ☐ Opportunities to develop social & emotional competence
- ☐ Opportunities for cognitive development & school readiness
- ☐ Parenting skills and "Parental Resilience"
- ☐ "Concrete support in times of need"

Special Considerations for the Child Welfare Population

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- ☐ Children in CW have experienced/experiencing traumatic stress (acute, chronic, or complex)
 - ☐ Trauma can impact:
 - ☐ **Child development:** Brain development, stress hormone dysregulation
 - ☐ **Psychosocial relationships:** Poor attachment, socialization, self-efficacy

Special Considerations for the Child Welfare Population

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- Children entering the child welfare system before age six are 4 to 5 times more likely to be diagnosed with a developmental delay compared with the general population
- Potential long-term consequences:
 - Intergenerational transmission of abuse
 - Mental Health problems (Depression, PTSD, Suicide)
 - Increased utilization of health and social services
 - Higher rates of homelessness and adult criminality

Trauma Informed Practice

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- **5 Essential elements of Trauma-informed practice:**
 1. Maximize the child's sense of safety.
 2. Coordinate services with other agencies.
 3. Support and promote positive and stable relationships in the life of the child.
 4. Assist children in reducing overwhelming emotion.
 5. Provide support and guidance to child's family and caregivers.



Effects of Trauma

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- Video Clips
 - Trauma, Brain & Relationships: Helping Children Heal
 - The Many Faces of Trauma
 - You Make the Difference
- Breakout Discussions

BREAKOUT

- ❑ Discuss the challenges associated with meeting the needs of children enrolled in ECE programs who are part of the child welfare system
 - ❑ What are the considerations for ECE?
 - ❑ What are the considerations for child welfare?



THE REFERRAL PROCESS

- ❑ How to use the DCFS-ECE referral system piloted in South County/Long Beach
- ❑ Eligibility for children in the Child Welfare system
- ❑ Structural barriers of the referral and enrollment process
- ❑ How to navigate the ECE network to ensure a child's developmental needs are met



Availability of Formal Care

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- ❑ According to 2011 statistics from the Office of Child Care:
 - ❑ 7,623 FCCHs in LA County (27% decrease from 2006)
 - ❑ 130,656 Center-based spaces available in LA County (loss of 24 Centers since 2006)
 - ❑ 50% of eligible preschoolers in LA County have access subsidized care
 - ❑ Only 20% of infants/toddlers are able to access subsidized care
- ❑ In 2006, available preschool spaces (including Head Start spaces) could accommodate 64% of eligible children in Los Angeles County

Structural Barriers

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- ☐ Eligibility alone does not guarantee available space.
- ☐ Space is particularly limited in Early Head Start.
- ☐ Wait lists may exceed several months.
- ☐ May-July is the optimal referral period to increase the likelihood of an eligible child's acceptance into Head Start in the fall.

Structural Barriers

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Program	Ages Served	Open Year Round?	Accept Subsidies?
LBUSD EHS	0 – 3 years old	Yes*	Yes
LBUSD HS	3 – 4 years old	No	Yes
LBUSD-CDC	3 – 5 th grade	Yes	No
LBUSD – Pre K TLC	3 – 5 years old	No	Yes
LAUP	4 year olds	No	Yes
Tinsley Family Day Care	0 – 6 years old	Yes	No
Little Owl Preschool	2.5 – 6 years old	Yes*	Yes

* Not all services provided during July/August; only open limited time

Utilization Patterns & Caregiver Preference: Child Welfare Population

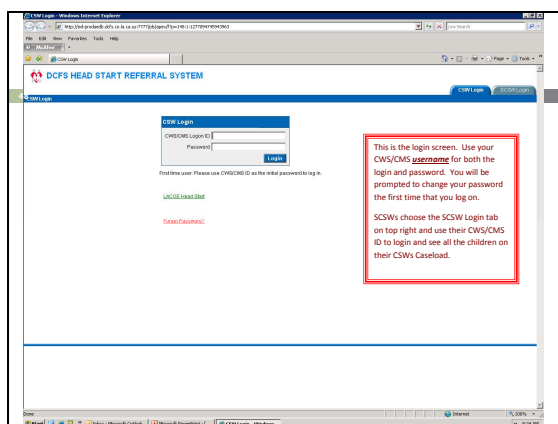
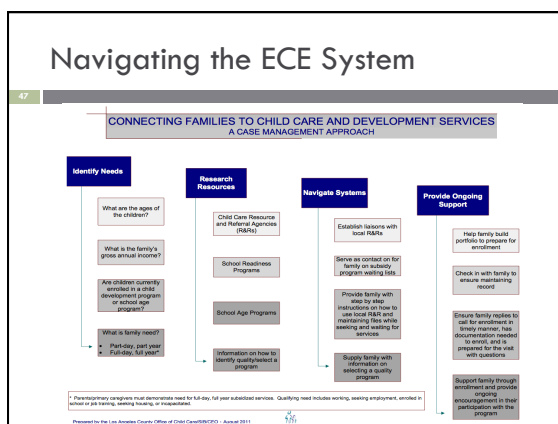
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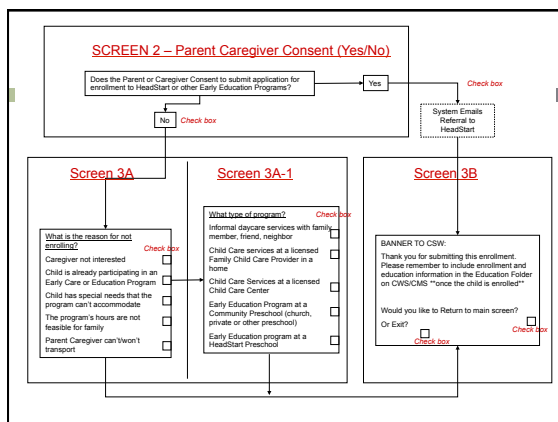
- ☐ Based on National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-being data from 2003 (Meloy & Phillips, 2012):
 - ☐ 78% of all foster parents reported need for daycare services
 - ☐ 27% of caregivers reported receiving these services or financial support for these services
 - ☐ 11% of caregivers utilized Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) subsidies
 - ☐ 17.4% of children age 3-5 in foster care were enrolled in Head Start

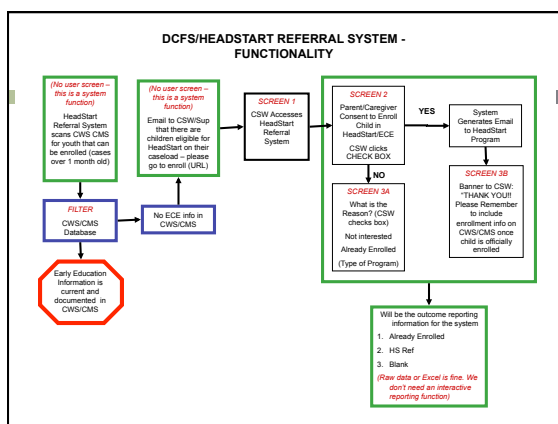
Eligibility

- Children in foster care are Head Start eligible, regardless of family income (45 CFR 1305.2(l))
- Children who are in need of “protective services” are eligible for Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) subsidy receipt (45 CFR 98.20(a)(3)(ii))
- Early Intervention (EI) services through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA Part C)

Navigating the ECE System







Following Up With Referral Process

- Parents/Caregivers should be initial point of contact for follow-up after referral has been made
- If Parent/Caregivers have indicated they have not been contacted, DCFS should be notified:
 - Steve Sturm, DCFS Education & Mentoring Unit (sturms@dcfs.lacounty.gov)
 - Cynthia Ruiz, Community Liaison LBUSD Head Start (cdr Ruiz@lbuschools.net)

DCFS & ECE Resources

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Nearly all children who are involved with DCFS are eligible to receive childcare or preschool for free or for very low cost. Call any of the numbers below to find out about enrolling the child you are caring for. Call **TODAY!**

- **HEADSTART PRESCHOOL**
(Including additional family services)
877-PRE-K-KID or 1-877-773-5543
- **LOS ANGELES UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL – LAUP**
866-581-LAUP or 1-866-581-5287
- **PRESCHOOL WITHOUT WALLS**
(310) 414-2090 Ext. 59 (Program Manager)
- **Your local RESOURCE AND REFERRAL AGENCY**
(for a wide variety of support services including Child Care and Preschool)
888-92-CHILD or 1-888-922-4453
- **LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT – EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION DIVISION**
(for areas served by LAUSD)
213-481-3300
- **DCFS Child Care Section**
562-345-6631

Final Questions?

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Thank you!

References

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